

MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor Cheryl Westover and Assembly Members
Jim Dinley, Municipal Administrator

From: Michael Harmon, Public Works Director 

cc: Sarah Bell, Library Director

Date: November 23rd, 2010

Subject: **Staff Reports: Library Expansion Project**

Background

Starting in 2002, Kettleson Memorial Library started to identify significant space needs through a lengthy process of analyzing library service standards and community surveys. It was determined that the 1983 addition needed to be updated and substantially expanded (2004 Kettleson Memorial Library Expansion Plan Report). The library expansion has been on the capital list every year since this was identified, but has struggled to attract State funding against larger project priorities. As a result of the challenging funding dynamics for rural libraries, Senator Bert Stedman helped create the Library Expansion and Construction Grant Program.

The creation of the Library Expansion and Construction Grant Program has revitalized this project with the potential to receive 50% funding by the State. Senator Bert Stedman has stress that the City and Borough of Sitka (CBS) should anticipate the Library to be funded through this program within the next two years. As a result of this potential, the Library has updated the "Needs Assessment" and the CBS is gearing up to start a Predevelopment Program for the Library Expansion Project.

Analysis

The Library Expansion and Construction Grant Program provides an excellent opportunity for this much needed project to attract additional funding through such organizations as Rasmuson Foundation, Denali Commission, Alaska Mental Health Trust, and other public/private donations. In order to ensure suitable projects are developed correctly and well positioned for funding, the Foraker Group Predevelopment Program was established. The CBS has been accepted into this program and the process has recently began consisting of general reconnaissance development.

Attached please find a summary from the Foraker Group regarding the Predevelopment process. It is important to note that this program is design to position a project to succeed under the various library funding programs. It is essential that the CBS follows this program in step with the hired experts and consultants that specialize in library predevelopment. Getting out of sequence with this program could significant impact future funding for the project. All costs and funds associated to this program are handled by the Foraker Group with the CBS contributing staff time and the \$750 initial application fee.

Memorandum

Date: 12 November 2010

To: Jim Dinley, City Administrator
CC: Sarah Bell, Library Director

From: Martha Schoenthal, Project Manager

Subject: Kettleson Library Participation in Foraker Group's Pre-Development Program

You have asked me to provide a memorandum that outlines activities associated with the Kettleson Library participation in the Foraker Group's Pre-Development Program and provide additional information regarding the current status of the State's matching grant funding opportunity.

The Foraker Group is a unique Alaska non-profit organization whose mission is to strengthen other Alaska non-profit organizations. The Pre-Development Program was established thru a joint agreement with the Denali Commission, the Alaska Mental Health Trust, and the Rasmuson Foundation and is designed to address concerns that inadequate planning can result in projects that are not sustainable in the long term. Your project to expand the Kettleson Library was sponsored into the program by the Rasmuson Foundation. The Pre-Development Program provides guidance and technical assistance in this process.

The goals thru this process are:

- Establish that the expansion meets a documented need
- Is consistent with community plans
- Considers collaborations
- Has appropriate facility and site plans and realistic budgets
- Is financially sustainable and
- Will not negatively impact the sustainability of the organization.

I am the Foraker Group's assigned project manager for this effort. Specific tasks that we plan to undertake are as follows:

1. Space planning: Pam Lund, a Foraker Group space planner, will review collections and usage documentation and interview library staff to prepare a recommended size of facility.
2. Concept Design: MRV Architects from Juneau will be engaged to develop a concept design.
3. Cost Estimate: Based upon that concept design, a professional construction cost estimator will provide a construction cost estimate for the project.
4. Project Development Plan: Prepare a document that captures the above information and includes the total project cost estimate and an operating cost estimate.

To support these efforts, we encourage you to appoint a feasibility committee for us to work with as we progress through these phases. The feasibility committee should be a diverse group composed of library and municipal staff, the Friends group, and user representatives. A total of five to eight individuals will make an efficient and effective working group.

The intent is to provide you and the community good information for use in decision making if you go forward with the project. Though we closely collaborate with staff and the community, we operate as an independent third party. These services are provided at no cost to you.

There appears to be an unusual funding opportunity emerging. The State of Alaska enacted legislation several years ago establishing a matching grant program for libraries. Last year, for the first time, six libraries received line item appropriations of matching funds. The actual grant program appears to be in a state of transition. Nevertheless, the Department of Community, Commerce and Economic Development has just released the funding application (<http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dca/>). The proposals are due January 7, 2011. The information generated in the Pre-Development process will assist you in making this grant application, if you so choose.

The Foraker Group does not presume to predict the outcomes of a grant process or a legislative session. I encourage you to contact your state legislators. Senator Steadman and his assistant, Miles Baker, have been instrumental in developing this program.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me at 907-301-8887 or at mrschoenthal@gmail.com.